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Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 IO-12

ACDA-19 MBFR-03 GAC-01 T-03 OMB-01 RSR-01 /128 W
---------- 041960
R 131720 Z MAR 73
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3846
INFO USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION BERLIN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BONN 3722

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: THE CDU LEADERSHIP QUESTION

1. SUMMARY: THE FIGHT OVER THE SELECTION OF DELEGATES TO THE SPD NATIONAL CONVENTION IN HANNOVER IN APRIL HAS OF LATE SO DOMINATED THE NEWS MEDIA THAT THE CONTINUED INABILITY OF THE CDU TO PRESENT A CONVINCING ALTERNATIVE TO THE BRANDT/ SCHEEL COALITION HAS BEEN, MERCIFULLY FOR THE CDU, SOMEWHAT MASKED. THIS IS THE SECOND TIME IN LESS THAN FOUR YEARS THAT THE CDU HAS BEEN FACED SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH BOTH A LEADERSHIP PROBLEM AND A QUESTION OF BASIC POLITICAL ORIENTATION, AND IT IS NOT AT ALL CERTAIN THAT IT HAS THE RESOURCES ADEQUATE TO THE CHALLENGE. MANY, HOWEVER, BELIEVE AT THIS TIME THAT THE LEADER WHO WILL BE GIVEN THE TASK WILL BE KOHL. END SUMMARY.
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2. AS THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL, THE CDU/ CSU EMERGED FROM THE 1969 FEDERAL ELECTIONS QUITE CLEARLY (I. E. 242 BUNDESTAG SEATS TO 224 FOR THE SPD) AS STILL THE MAJOR SINGLE FORCE IN GERMAN POLITICS, ONLY TO BE " BETRAYED", AS MUCH OF THE CDU SAW IT, BY THE FDP WHICH, " AGAINST THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE", ASSISTED BRANDT TO BECOME CHANCELLOR. IN THE MONTH FOLLOWING THAT ELECTION, A CDU NATIONAL CONVENTION 1) RE- ELECTED KIESINGER AS CHAIRMAN, THOUGH HE WAS CLEARLY FINISHED, AND 2) SET UP A COMMISSION UNDER KOHL AND KOEPPLER TO DEVISE A PROGRAM FOR THE FUTURE.

3. TO KOHL AND KOEPPLER, BOTH MEMBERS OF THE CDU' S LIBERAL WING AND BOTH PRACTICING POLITICIANS, IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT THE CDU HAD LOST GROUND IN 1969 BECAUSE IT HAD ALLOWED ITSELF TO BECOME COMPLACENT AND STOLID. HOWEVER, BY THE TIME THE NEXT NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE CDU TOOK PLACE-- JANUARY, 1971, IN DUESSELDORF-- IT WAS EQUALLY CLEAR THAT THE MODERATELY LIBERAL PROGRAM THE TWO K' S HAD DRAFTED WAS UNDIGESTIBLE TO A MAJORITY OF THE CDU-- CERTAINLY TO A MAJORITY PRESENT AND VOTING IN DUESSELDORF. INDEED THE CLEAR HEROES OF THAT CONVENTION WERE STRAUSS AND THE ARCH- CONSERVATIVE DREGGER (STRAUSS HAS NOT APPEARED AT A CDU NATIONAL CONVENTION SINCE).

4. MUCH OF THE BLOOD SHED ON THAT OCCASION WAS, OF COURSE, KOHL' S AND FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST OF ALL, HIS VIEWS WERE QUITE CLEARLY MINORITY ONES, AND ONES WHICH THE CONVENTION, IF PUSHED TO IT, WAS PREPARED TO REJECT. KOHL OF COURSE KNEW THAT AND ELECTED NOT TO FIGHT. THEREFORE, AND SECONDLY, HE EARNED THE CONTEMPT OF HIS SUPPORTERS AND THE SCORN OF HIS CONSERVATIVE OPPONENTS.

5. THUS DESPITE BARZEL' S SEVERAL HANDICAPS, KOHL IS NOT ATTRACTIVE ENOUGH WITHIN THE CDU TO MAKE BARZEL' S CANDIDACY TO SUCCEED HIMSELF AS PARTY CHAIRMAN AS FUTILE AS IT MIGHT SEEM. NOR HAS KOHL, SO FAR, DONE MUCH MORE THAN PROVE THAT HE NOW KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM TWO YEARS AGO. THUS, SO FAR HE HAS OFFERED NO PROGRAM AT ALL AND ARGUES MERELY THAT THE OFFICE OF PARTY CHAIRMAN AND THAT OF FLOOR LEADER IN THE BUNDESTAG OUGHT NOT TO BE HELD BY THE SAME MAN. KOHL' S VULNERABILITY IS, OF COURSE, BEING EXPLOITED QUITE EFFECTIVELY BY HIS OPPONENT, BARZEL, WHO IS NOT OFFERING MUCH HIMSELF BY WAY OF POLICY BUT IS MANAGING TO
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CONCEAL HIS OWN AMBIVALENCE BEHIND A FLURRY OF INTRA- PARTY

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CONSULTATIONS AND THE ACTIVITIES OF STUDY COMMISSIONS BEYOND NUMBER.

6. BARZEL DEFEATED KOHL FOR THE PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP BY A VOTE OF 344 TO 174 IN THE FALL OF 1971 AT SAARBRUECKEN, ANT IT IS GENERALLY ASSUMED THAT THE VOTE WILL AT LEAST BE CLOSER THIS FALL. BUT THE QUESTION OF THE PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP IS NOT ISOLATED FROM OTHER PARTY MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE, AND THUS MORE IS AT STAKE THAN A BARZEL- KOHL CONFRONTATION IN HAMBURG IN OCTOBER.

7. FIRST AMONG THESE IS THE QUESTION OF THE CDU' S CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE IN 1976. THE PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP WILL AGAIN BE OPEN IN THE FALL OF 1975, AND THE WINNER THEN WILL PROBABLY HAVE AN INSIDE TRACK THE FOLLOWING YEAR. THEREFORE THOSE WITH AMBITIONS FOR THE PARTY NOD IN 1976 WILL WANT THE WEAKEST POSSIBLE OPPONENT. THIS MEANS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT WE CAN EXPECT STOLTENBERG TO SUPPORT BARZEL THIS FALL ON THIS PURELY TACTICAL GROUND.

8. SECOND IS THE QUESTION OF FLOOR LEADER. IF BARZEL IS DEFEATED IN OCTOBER-- AND AS HE CONTINUALLY POINTS OUT, NO CDU PARTY CHAIRMAN HAS EVER BEEN VOTED DOWN WHEN HE SOUGHT RE- ELECTION-- HE WILL MOST PROBABLY NOT SEEK RE- ELECTION THE FOLLOWING MONTH AS FLOOR LEADER. AS THERE IS NO CLEAR HEIR APPARENT, AND AS HE IS AN EFFECTIVE, RESOURCEFUL FLOOR LEADER, THIS PROSPECT WILL TEND TO HELP HIM, PARTICULARLY AMONG THESE CONVENTION DELEGATES WHO ARE ALSO BUNDESTAG DEPUTIES WHERE HIS PRESTIGE IS AT ITS HIGHEST.

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NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 IO-12

ACDA-19 MBFR-03 GAC-01 T-03 OMB-01 RSR-01 /128 W
---------- 041921
R 131720 Z MAR 73
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3847
INFO USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION BERLIN UNN
AMCONSUL BREMEN UNN
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AMCONSUL FRANKFURT UNN
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9. FURTHERMORE, THE GENERAL TREND OF THE PARTY WILL BE AT STAKE NO MATTER HOW LITTLE KOHL AND BARZEL CARE TO DISCUSS POLICY CONCRETELY, AND THE MOOD WILL PROBABLY BE FAR MORE FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD SHORT STEPS TO THE LEFT THAN IT WAS FOLLOWING THE 1969 ELECTION IF ONLY BECAUSE THE PARTY LEARNED BITTERLY IN 1972 THAT THE ELECTION THREE YEARS EARLIER WAS NOT AN ANOMALY NEVER TO BE REPEATED. HERE TOO BARZEL HAS OUT-MANEUVERED KOHL. BY CLAIMING FORMER LABOR MINISTER KATZER AS HIS CHIEF LIEUTENANT, HE HAS TACITLY IDENTIFIED HIMSELF WITH THE FORCES OF PROGRESS AND THUS INVADED
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THAT VAGUE AREA ON THE PARTY' S LEFT THAT SUPPOSEDLY BELONGS TO KOHL. BUT DESPITE BARZEL' S TENACITY AND ENERGY, THE CDU LOST BADLY IN NOVEMBER AND HE IS GIVEN MUCH OF THE BLAME. DESPITE ALL HIS EFFORTS, THEREFORE, THE FACT OF NOVEMBER WILL PROBABLY PROVE INSURMOUNTABLE.

10. THE ROLE OF STRAUSS WILL ALSO BE RELEVANT, HOWEVER INDIRECTLY, AT HAMBURG BECAUSE 1) THE CSU DID QUITE WELL IN THE NOVEMBER ELECTION, AND 2) THE CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE IN 1976 WILL REQUIRE CSU APPROVAL. IF IT IS TRUE, AS RUMORS IN THE CSU NOW HOLD, THAT STRAUSS WANTS TO BECOME FLOOR LEADER, THEN WE CAN EXPECT HIS PRESENT TOLERATION OF KOHL TO BECOME WARMER. STRAUSS MAY WELL BELIEVE THAT THE COUNTRY IN 1976 WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY DISENCHANTED WITH DEMO-CRATIC SOCIALISM TO MAKE A RETURN TO CONSERVATISM THE PATH OF PRACTICAL POLITICS, IN WHICH CASE KOHL AS PARTY CHAIRMAN WOULD NOT PRESENT AN INVINCIBLE OPPONENT SHOULD STRAUSS SEEK TO BECOME THE CDU/ CSU' S CHANCELLOR

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CANDIDATE THEN.

11. THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IS IN GENERAL SILENT. THE PARTY IS SOME MONTHS AWAY FROM THE SELECTION OF DELE- GATES TO HAMBURG AND, FOR THE MOST PART, THE PARTY' S MAJOR LEADERS ARE PROCEEDING QUITE CUATIOUSLY. THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT EXCEPTIONS, HOWEVER, AND THESE ARE HOSTILE TO BARZEL. ROEDER IN THE SAAR IS DIRECTLY CRITICAL OF BARZEL, AND KOEPPLER IN NORTH- RHINE WESTPHALIA IS INDIRECTLY SO, AS IS, INDIRECTLY AS WELL, NORBERT BLUEM, KATZER' S LIEUTENANT ON THE SOCIAL COMMITTEES.

12. COMMENT: THE CDU AFTER OCTOBER WILL HAVE A LEADER, BUT IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR THAT HE WILL, EITHER FROM PRIVATE CONVICTIONS OR PARTY PLATFORM, KNOW WHITHER TO LEAD IT. THEREFORE, IF THE SPD CAN BRING ITS OWN HOUSE TO ORDER AND CONTINUE TO OFFER THE POPULAR WILLY BRANDT TO A WELL- FED POPULACE, THE PROSPECTS FOR THE CDU IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE ARE MEAGER INDEED. AS FOR THE KOHL- BARZEL CONFRONTATION, BARZEL' S POSITION IS BETTER THAN ONE COULD HAVE PREDICTED ON THE DAY AFTER THE NOVEMBER ELECTION, BUT
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MANY OBSERVERS CONSIDER IT LIKELY, NEVERTHELESS, THAT KOHL, WHO WILL START HIS MAJOR DRIVE IN MAY, WILL BECOME PARTY CHAIRMAN IN OCTOBER.
HILLENBRAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: worrelsw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BONN03722
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730326/aaaahonc.tel
Line Count: 261
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: worrelsw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23-Jul-2001 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <22-Aug-2001 by worrelsw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971124
Subject: THE CDU LEADERSHIP QUESTION
TAGS: PINT
To: BERLIN
BREMEN
DUSSELDORF
EUR
LONDON
MOSCOW
NATO

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Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

PARIS
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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